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at the expense of Monroe, and, indeed, of the country; for the entanglement of our relations with England, due to Jefferson's wish for universal peace, could only be resolved by war. "Peaceable coercion," when employed on such powers as England and France, was the quintessence of impotency, and the means used, the embargo, on which must rest Jefferson's reputation as a "philosophic legislator," only proved this fact. Jefferson retired from office fully conscious that his popularity had been severely injured, and that he had bequeathed to Madison the many perplexities and dangers that his well-meant though mistaken policy had produced. As Randolph said: "Never has there been any administration which went out of office and left the nation in a state so deplorable and calamitous."

In this work we have for the first time a full-length portrait of Jefferson, drawn by a master hand; and it is to be hoped that the welcome given so deservedly to these volumes will induce Mr. Adams to continue the work. It would be difficult to find an American history that can approach it in completeness and in judicial tone.

WORTHINGTON CHAUNCEY FORD.

John Jay. By GEORGE PELLEW. [American Statesmen Series.] Boston, Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1890. — 12mo, 374 pp.

The first chief justice of the Supreme Court of the United States was born in New York city in 1745, was educated at King's College, was admitted to the bar at the age of twenty-three, and married into the Livingston family in 1774. Immediately after his marriage he entered public life as a member of the committee of fifty chosen by the citizens of New York to consider the means necessary for repelling the British taxation measures of that period. He became the presiding officer of Congress under the Confederation; went upon an unsuccessful mission to the court of Spain; was one of the negotiators of peace at the close of the Revolution, and finally was offered by Washington the choice of appointments in the gift of the President. That he elected to be the head of the federal judiciary is a significant comment upon the new system about to be inaugurated, and must have been, as we look upon it at this distance of time, a favorable augury for the third department of government then first to be established.

Jay was twenty-eight years old when he first accepted public office; for twenty-eight years he served his state and country; and then for a third period of twenty-eight years he remained entirely in private life. To the first and third of these periods the present volume devotes but fifty pages all told, while over three hundred are given up to the acts

of the statesman period. This allotment of space was perhaps inevitable, but it is to be regretted that its spirit pervades the entire work. The man Jay is kept quite too far in the background, while his acts as an officer or judge or diplomatist are set forth much after the style of a chronicle; so that Mr. Pellew seems not to have been able — perhaps he has not attempted — to make graphic or interesting the scenes in which Jay took part. His hero is an automaton, moving through a certain course with a mechanical exactness that excites astonishment at the unknown genius which controls the mechanism. Yet Jay was, we know, one of the most human of beings. In his letters to his wife (we wish for fuller extracts), in his correspondence while minister abroad, of which we have here but the skeleton, in his treatment of his slaves, here dismissed in half a paragraph, we see the living, feeling man, in spite of the unconscious skill with which this being is here concealed in the cold, clear, calculating statesman.

As a biography, then, this work unwittingly does injustice to its subject. As a history it is deserving of more consideration; for its author has unquestionably shown diligence in his researches, and has made use of some sources not before accessible, while not neglecting the standard works. Yet it is not the whole of writing history to state facts; and it is just on this point that this work is disappointing. The number of facts given in its pages is totally out of proportion to the amount of setting given to those facts. No fact legitimately forms part of a written history unless correlated with a cause or an effect or both. That the court met and adjourned for lack of a quorum, or that the post-horses were engaged for the Comte du Nord (with whose acquaintance we are otherwise not honored) — this is not history.

“Local color” is a much-abused element in modern writing, but its desirability is only too strongly shown in this volume. Jay spends over two years in Spain, yet no account is given of the nature of the court from which he sought recognition; he is elected president of Congress when but three days a member, but scarcely a hint is given of the reasons for so astonishing a selection. A similar mistake is the introduction of the names (not quite the personalities) of men not to-day known to the average reader, without a word to explain their positions or characters or even their nationality. Thus Marbois, Vergennes, Luzerne and Gérard are spoken of with the same easy familiarity that we are accustomed to use in mentioning Washington, Jefferson, Hamilton or Jay. To the reader not already acquainted with the history of the diplomacy of the Revolution this must be confusing in the extreme.

Nevertheless, Mr. Pellew has gathered, in convenient and accessible form, much of the history of the times of Jay, and has given a succinct account of so much of our formative period as Jay took part in, and

this was not a little. Especially valuable are the chapters upon the peace negotiations; while this anecdote, preserved by family tradition, is a useful commentary on some notions now current as to the "forefathers": "'Jay,' said Gouverneur Morris some thirty years afterward — 'Jay,' he ejaculated, 'what a set of d——d scoundrels we had in that second Congress!' 'Yes,' said Jay, 'that we had'; and he knocked the ashes from his pipe."

HENRY HARMON NEILL.

De l'organisation des Conseils Généraux. Par GEORGES DETHAN. Paris, A. Giard, 1889. — 331 pp.

This work is somewhat disappointing. As its title indicates, it is devoted to the organization of the general councils of the French departments. Nothing whatever is said, however, about the functions of these bodies. It is not therefore by any means a complete discussion of this, one of the most important of French local authorities. But perhaps it is ungracious to criticize a book for not being what it does not pretend to be or what its author never intended to make it. Dr. Dethan purposed merely to give a thorough and detailed description of the organization of the general council, and this he has done. The first part of the work is devoted to the "General Councils before 1871," the date of the law governing them at the present time. This is followed by a discussion of the law of 1871, the reasons for its passage, and an outline of the important changes made by it. The other chapters of the work are given up to a detailed description of the organization of the present general councils and their permanent committees, the departmental commissions, with quite full references to the decisions of the council of state and the department of the Interior relative to the workings of the present law.

The most interesting part of the work is the introductory portion, treating of the attempt made under the *ancien régime* to form local legislative and administrative bodies in the provinces. In these assemblies, whose formation was due to Necker, are to be found the germs of the present general councils. Not only, however, are the general councils to be traced back to the provincial assemblies of Necker, but the departmental commissions also, founded finally almost a century after Necker lived, are derived from one of the features of his plan, *viz.* the *commission intermédiaire*.

Another interesting portion of the book is that devoted to the analysis of the various plans presented to the National Assembly of 1871. Whatever differences may have existed between these plans, they all were permeated by the same idea, *viz.* decentralization. So great was the demand of all for more local freedom than was granted by the institu-